

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

HATCH COVE/DIAMOND MOUNTAIN
LOP AND SCATTER PROJECT

DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2016-0041-EA

September 2016

Location: Uintah County, Vernal, Utah

Township 2 South, Range 24, Sections 13, 24, & 25; Township 2 South, Range 25, Sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, & 29; SLB&M.

Applicant/Address:

Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078
435-781-4400
435-781-4410

BLM



HATCH COVE/DIAMOND MOUNTAIN LOP & SCATTER PROJECT

DECISION RECORD

(DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2016-0041-EA)

DECISION

Based on my understanding of the information contained in the *Hatch Cove/Diamond Mountain Lop & Scatter Project* Environmental Assessment and my subsequent finding of no significant impact, it is my decision to authorize the actions needed to restore and maintain sagebrush steppe habitat, and reduce fuel loads as set out in DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2016-0041-EA.

The following actions will be realized:

- Apply the lop & scatter treatments to the project area, minimizing the loss of sagebrush steppe habitat, reducing the existing hazardous fuel loads and decreasing the risk of unplanned fire events.
- Apply ongoing weed control efforts following treatment.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL/STIPULATIONS

- If disturbance activities must be scheduled to start during the nesting season (March 1- August 31), a site-specific survey would be conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist for migratory bird nests. The survey must be performed prior to ground disturbing activities or vegetation treatments to verify if there are any nesting activities. Any documented active nests sites would be avoided by 100 foot buffer.
- If project activities were to occur during the nesting season (March 1 – August 31), raptor surveys conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist, and no tree removal would be allowed within 0.5 up to 1 mile of an occupied/active nest site until fledglings have left the area. There is a known Cooper’s hawk nest 0.59 miles and an American kestrel nest 0.58 miles from the project area.

- Coopers Hawk Spatial and Seasonal Buffer: 0.5 miles, March 1- August 31
- American Kestrel Spatial and Seasonal Buffer: No buffer, April 1- August 15
- No treatment activities will be allowed March 1- August 31 during the breeding and nesting season for Mexican spotted owl.
- No treatment activities will be allowed from May 15- June 30 during crucial elk calving and deer fawning period, and from December 1 – April 30 during the crucial elk winter period.
- No treatment activities will be allowed from Feb. 15 – June 15 during the breeding, nesting and early brood-rearing season for Greater sage-grouse.
- No treatment activities will be allowed from Nov. 15 – March 15 during the winter time season for Greater sage-grouse.
- Applicable Required Design Features (RDFs) found in Appendix B, as determined by the BLM in the Utah Greater Sage-grouse Approved RMP Amendment (2015), will be applied to the project to ensure regulatory certainty by using these recommended best management practices.
- During the project treatment implementation trees will be dispersed evenly across the landscape, brush piles will not be left, trees stumps will be cut close to the ground and no linear edges will be made in order to maintain the visual resources.

COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

There are numerous existing UDWR range trend sites adjacent to the project area. UDWR will continue to monitor the trend sites near the project area. BLM will establish pre-and post-treatment photo sites and tree density per acre within the project area.

RATIONALE

My decision to authorize implementation of the proposed action alternative will not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation to wilderness characteristics, threatened or endangered species, cultural resources, or matters pertaining to Native American religious freedoms or their customs. Realization of the proposed action is in conformance with the existing Vernal RMP (2008) and is consistent with the Uintah County Land Use Plan. The No Action Alternative was not selected because that alternative would not meet the stated purpose and need of restoring sagebrush steppe vegetation and reducing the hazardous fuel loads. Implementation of the proposed action will result in the improvement towards a vigorous and healthy sagebrush steppe habitat.

The treatment will result in the following positive result:

1. Reductions of the existing hazardous fuel load and decrease the risk of unplanned fire events.
2. Reduce fire behavior intensity characteristics in the area for more favorable suppression activities in the event of a wildland fire.
3. The forage for both livestock and big game species would be maintained.
4. Habitat values for sagebrush related keystone species (sage-grouse) would be improved.

PROTEST AND APPEAL

As per 43 CFR 5003.1. (b), this decision is effective immediately. The decision or approval may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR 4.21. Within 30 days of receipt of the decision, an appeal must be filed to:

Interior Board of Land Appeals
Office of Hearings and Appeals
U.S. Department of the Interior
801 North Quincy St., Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia, 22203.

A copy of the notice of appeal must also be filed in the BLM Vernal Field Office as well as the Office of the Solicitor at:

BLM Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah
84078

Office of the Solicitor
125 South State Street, Suite 6201
Salt Lake City, Utah
84138

Public notification of this decision will be considered to have occurred on April 2016. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for stay pursuant to 43 CFR 3150.2(b), the petition for stay should accompany your notice of appeal and shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on merits,
3. The likelihood of irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted, and
4. Whether the public interest favors the granting of the stay

Signatures	
/s/ Ester M McCullough	9/22/2016
Authorized Officer	Date